Amateur Radio Newsline™ Report 1413 – September 10, 2004

Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1413 with a release date of
Friday, September 10th, 2004 to follow in 5-4-3-2-1.

The following is a Q-S-T.

Hurricane Frances strikes Florida and ham radio is prepared. Hear the ham radio first responders in action on Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1413 coming your way right now.

(Billboard Cart Here)

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RESCUE RADIO: HURRICANE FRANCES VS. HAM RADIO

Hurricane Frances pounded Florida with high wind and heavy rain after it smashed across the state's East coast. Close to 4 million residents lost power and telephone service. Cellular phone networks that survived Frances's gale force winds quickly became overloaded. Enter ham radio. Amateur Radio Newsline's David Black, KB4KCH has been following the story from our South-East bureau in Birmingham, Alabama:

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When Hurricane Frances hit Florida on Labor Day weekend, the storm ripped roofs off buildings, toppled trees and cut power to about 4 million people. Also lost was part of the states telephone and cellular service. This created a communications vacuum.

But hams affiliated with SATERN - the Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network, A-R-E-S, and the Hurricane Watch Net were expecting Frances. Radio amateurs had been tracking this storm as it ravaged its way across the Caribbean. And it was ham radio that let the world know of the destruction the giant storm had caused as it hit some of the islands:

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"Roger roger. On Elutheria Ill say about 40 percent of the structures have damage. In the Rainbow Bay area where I live I would say about 70% of the hhomes here have structural damage. Over."

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Once a Category 4 hurricane with winds of 145 mph, Frances had weakened to a Category 2 storm as it neared Florida. Winds dropped to a peak of 105 mph as it made landfall at Sewall's Point, north of Palm Beach, around 1 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Saturday, September 4th. Ham radio operators affiliated with the Hurricane Watch Net tracked its approach:

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"This is KA5E with the Hurricane Watch Net. We are currently taking measured weather reports out of the affected area for Hurricane Frances. Do I have any stations on with pdates or signifigant weather reports. KA5E, over."

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The powerful storm hit Florida with ferocious winds and sheets of rain. The hurricane was so large and slow moving that its western outer edges had began arriving on the east coast on Saturday morning. On Sunday morning its eastern edges were still pounding the coast from which 2.5 million people had been told to flee. Repeaters interconnected using I-R-L-P and Echolnk were pressed into service to help coordinate the latest round of evacuations:

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“KC4PNC KB1CYO net control. Go ahead sir,”

“They have called for mandatory evacuation for Hillsboro county for manufactured homes and also mobile homes. They have not ordered a mandatory for low lieing areas but they are strongly recommendng it.”

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And as evacuee’s poured into shelters, communications volunteers were needed. A call was put out over the interlinked repeater network and the hams responded

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“We are looking for any volunteerr Amateur Radio operators to help with shelters. We have eight shelters open right now. Those are being manned. However, since its a declared evacuation all of the other shelters will be opened and we are looking for vlunteers to man those shelters. KC4PNC.”

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As Frances path of destruction hit Florida's central Atlantic coast counties, blinding rain squalls drove clouds of sand into the air. At the same time high waves thundered onto the beaches. One ham watched as his rain gage was torn away and white caps pounded ashore:

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“Any kind of rainfall accumulation?”

“No, that gage blew away but I can tell you that we are in a high tide area right now and I can see the tides up about a foot and a half and I have water coming over my seawall. But its not a problem. We are still at a much higher elevation. The water is over the seawall along the Intercoastal Waterway.”

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As palm trees rained coconuts and then toppled over and buildings suffered extensive damage there was also a tragedy at sea. And the U-S Coast Guard turned to Amateur Radio for help:

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“I want to remind the net that the Coast Guard has asked us to lend assistance in the search for the Anna Marie. It is a vessel that went down off the coast of Sarasota this evening about 10 to 12 miles out. Any assistance or any information on the Anna Marie that went down with the crew 10 o 12 miles out of Sarasota, the U.S. Coast Guard would appreciate your assistance.”

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At airtime its not known what happened to the Anna Marie nor the fate of its crew. But as the search continued, there was yet another threat. Early on Sunday the 5th, the massive weather system spawned a tornado, and the warning went out over the I-R-L-P ham radio network:

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“The tornado is expected to be by Bostwick by by 2:45 Eastern, Forholm by 3:00 a.m. and thats all I have.”

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As that twister touching down the National Weather Service office in Jacksonville issued a tornado warning for Northern Clay County including the city of Orange Park. Also affected were St. Johns, Clay, and Putnam Counties. And as dawn was breaking radar picked up a developing tornado near Doctors Inlet moving West at 45 mph. Only some damage to roofs was reported.

But reporting weather was not the only chore radio amateurs were involved in. Another as health and welfare. Letting worried relatives and friends know about those stuck in Frances path. Many like this central American station who was happy to hear that the hurricane was headed away from his daughters location:

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“OK. Great. Thank you very much. I appreciate that information. We are here in a location where we do not have any TV or any other communication. We are on the beach on the West coast of Panama. So thanks very much I do appreciate it. This is HB1XRO and the handle is Bob.”

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By Monday afternoon, Frances had crossed the eastern Gulf of Mexico and made its second landfall in Florida's northwest Panhandle section some 20 miles south of Tallahassee. Now it only a tropical storm with sustained wind near 65 mph. Damage was mainly to power and telephone lines. At that point the forecasters were predicting the storm would move north-northwest at about 8 mph, and was not expected to regain hurricane strength.

Frances soaked Georgia, dumping 11 inches of rain in a 24 hour period in the town of Patterson.

Media reports blame Frances for at least seven deaths in Florida, including two people who were killed Saturday when the roof of he building they were in collapsed. There were also two deaths in the Bahamas. One of these was a

teenager who was reportedly electrocuted when he tried to hook up a generator to a power mains that was still on.

With thanks to the hams who supplied the storm audio over the Internet used in this report, I'm David Black, KB4KCH at the South-East bureau in Birminham Alabama for the Amateur Radio Newsline. (ARNewsline(tm))

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RESCUE RADIO: HAM RADIO PREPARES FOR IVAN

And its not over yet. As we go to air Hurricane Ivan is making its way cross the Caribbean and could strike the United States. CQ's newsdesk reports that Amateur Radio at the National Hurricane Center, WX4NHC, was to be reactivated for Hurricane Ivan at 2 PM EDT Thursday, Sept. 9, and will be active on Friday-Sunday 8 AM-11 PM EDT. The Hurricane Center will be on the Hurricane Watch Net on 20 meters as well as the VoIP Hurricane Net,. The latter is a combination of IRLP and Echolink stations.

The Cayman Islands and Jamaica are the next locations in the path of this extremely dangerous Category V Hurricane which now has maximum sustained winds of 160 MPH per the latest advisory issued at 5 AM EDT Thursday morning.

VoIP Net Control Station Rob Macedo, KD1CY, says they are trying to coordinate with the IRLP node owners on the Cayman Islands and Jamaica on usage of their nodes and liaisons to those affected areas. Currently there are no Echolink or IRLP nodes in Cuba.

National Hurricane Center advisories indicate that the path of Hurricane Ivan is not clear after it passes over Cuba on Sunday. Residents in the affected area should monitor the situation closely. There is a possibility that the hurricane's forward progress could slow and emergency nets may be activated for an extended period of time. It also means that ham radio communications volunteers could have a lot more to do in the coming days. (CQ)

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Break 1

>From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline, heard on bulletin stations around the world including the repeaters of the Condor Connection intertie serving the great American South-West.

(5 sec pause here)

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RESCUE RADIO: FIRST RESPONDERS SAY THEY NEED INTEROPERABILITY

Meantime, three years after the nine eleven terrorist attacks, thousands of police and fire divisions in cities and counties across the United States still

do not have coordinated communications capabilities. So says the First Response Coalition and Amateur Radio Newslines Norm Seeley, KI7UP, has the details:

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The First Response Coalition calls this lack of interoperability an unresolved national crisis and it has decided to take on the FCC and big business to solve it. This as the organization reaches out directly to more than 43,000 local police and fire officials to solicit their help.

First Response wants Congress to overturn the FCC decision to award spectrum to Nextel in favor of a plan that deals both with interference problem and the interoperability crisis. Gene Stilp, who is the First Response Coalition coordinator says that the FCC plan involving Nextel is wrong for police officers and firefighters. This is because it only takes on only part of the interference issue. Moreover, it does not do anything about the lack of interoperability between emergency response groups.

The First Response Coalition says that this outreach program is getting a very favorable grassroots response. So far over 17 fire chiefs have joined ranks with the group in opposing the FCC's current plan for what they call a give away of taxpayer-owned spectrum.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I’m Norm Seeley, KI7UP.

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About the only emergency responders these days who have full two way radio interoperability are radio amateurs. Hams had voluntarily set world-wide communications standards many years ago. (First Response Coalition release)

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RESCUE RADIO: AMBER ALERT LINKS UP TO THE WEB

The nation's Amber Alert system has become a web available tool. This, thanks to a portal made available by the E2C company of Scottsdale, Arizona.

Until now, Amber Alerts have been a primarily radio based technology. This meant that messages had depended on the nation's Emergency Alert system for relay and delivery. The new Web-based system can process and transmit the same emergency information more quickly and make it available to a wider variety of devices. It also comes with software that pinpoints the location of a child abduction and sends out emergency notification targeted to that geographic area.

As of now, Amber Alert managers in 11 states have access to the new portal. Use of the system is expected to expand to the 49 states that have statewide Amber Alert systems. Hawaii has no statewide system but has several local alert networks. (E2C)

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THE BPL FIGHT: VK 4-WHEELERS JOIN BPL FIGHT

A Four Wheel Drive hobby group has joined the fight against BPL. Its happening down-under. WIA Newscaster Phil Waite ,VK2DKN, reports:

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The VKS737 4WD HF Radio Network, joined the fight against BPL last week, following the recent WIA news broadcast by Jim Linton, VK3PC, highlighting the BPL industry's attack on interference protection for so called `recreational radio services' and an approach from WIA Director, Glen Dunstan, VK4DU.

VKS737 are currently circulating their members with information about the threat BPL poses to their activities, and encouraging their members to lobby politicians on the issue.

The VKS737 network is used extensively for emergency communications in remote areas, as well as serving the communications needs of outback travellers. Their current membership is around 7,000 and they potentially reach 250,000 Australian 4WD owners.

Many of their network base stations are in urban areas potentially affected by BPL and VKS737 members are rightly concerned about the threat presented to their HF communications. Their organisation is also associated with the Australian Citizens Emergency Radio network, who provide similar services on citizens band frequencies.

Phil Waite, VK2DKN, for the WIA National News.

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The Wireless Institute of Australia is discussing ways the two organizations can assist each other in the fight against BPL. (WIA News)

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INTRUDER WATCH: STRANGE SIGNALS AT 7238 KHZ

According to Bob Gonsett, W6VR, for the past three weeks, hams in the southwestern U.S. have been reporting a mysterious signal in the 40-meter band. One party described it as a "mechanical sound." Another speculated that it was "data."

Engineers at Communications General Corporation in Fallbrook California took a quick look at the situation on Septeember 6th. And at 3:20 P-M Pacific Daylight Savings Time the company found several close-spaced CW carriers. The four strongest signals at CGC's lab were on 7238.063, 7238.150, 7238.237 and 7238.412 kHz. The signal on .237 was the strongest of the group and the frequencies reported should each be accurate to better than plus or minus 30 Hz.

Communications General says it is not sure if the signal was coming from one specially modulated transmitter or from transmitters at different locations. Bob Gonsett adds that it will be interesting to learn the source or sources of these transmissions. (W6VR, CGC)

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SAFETY: RADIO ENGINEER ELECTROCUTED WHILE WORKING ALONE AT TOWER SITE

The hazards of working near power lines has been brought front and center again. This with word that a Wyoming broadcast engineer has killed while working at a transmitter site in Colorado.

Thirty nine year old Robin Bradley Thomas was killed while working alone, trying to install a radio transmitter. The accident happened about 18 miles northwest of Red Feather Lakes in northern Colorado. Indications are that Thomas of Cheyenne died when he accidentally came in contact with high-voltage and was electrocuted. Thomas was described as an experienced engineer who contracted out his services. (CGC)

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RADIO LAW: CELLPHONE PROVIDERS SUED OVER LOCKED PHONES

A consumer watchdog group sued three cellular telephone companies. This. for "locking" their phones to make it harder for customers to switch carriers.

The Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights is the group that filed the suit in Los Angeles. It accuses AT&T Wireless Services Inc., T-Mobile USA Inc. and Cingular Wireless, of using software in their handsets that prevents them from being used on a competitors' network.

All phones in question use Global System Mobile communications, or GSM technology which effectively limits a handset to a specific carrier using a non interchangeable SIM card. The lawsuit complains that this is an unfair and deceptive business practice under California state law.

The phone companies are defending their policy. They say that they routinely subsidize handset cost and would loose substantial revenue if they allowed customers to easily use those phones with another carrier. (Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights)

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REPEATER COORDINATION: METROCOR MORITORIUM TO END DECEMBER 15

Attention repeater owners in the New York metro and surrounding area. An impoerant deadline is aproaching.

You may remember that your new area frequency coordinator MetroCor had put in place a two year moritorium on new co-channel coordinations when the group came into being. It had also asked existing repeater operators who have documented proof of expired coordination from the now defunct Tri State Amateur Repeater Council to update their coordinations with MetroCor.

In a posting to QRZ.com, MetroCor's Mario Sellitti, N2PVP, says that this moratorium had minimized the possibility that new coordinations might inadvertently displace longstanding users of the spectrum. It also helped to avoid creating disputes where none previously existed.

Now, says Sellitti, this period must now come to an end. He says that MetroCor will be terminating the moratorium as of midnight, Saturday, December 15th.

But he adds this qualifier. Sellitti says that anyone in the area having a repeater or knowing of one belonging to another ham, and that repeater qualifies for this exception, to please refer to MetroCor's on-line F-A-Q in item No. 11. This will give you or the person with the other machine the information needed to gain new coordination through MetroCor. Those in need will find it on-line at www.metrocor.net/faq.htm. (MetroCor, QRZ.com)

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THE SOCIAL SCENE: W9DXCC CONVENTION IN ILLINOIS IN SEPT

Turning to upcoming social events, Joe Shrader, W9JUV says that the 52nd annual W9DXCC Convention and Banquet takes place Saturday, September 18th. This years venue is the Holiday Inn Chicago in Elk Grove, Illinois with noted DXer and author John Devoldere, ON4UN, as the featured banquet speaker.

John Devoldere leads the world in countries worked on 80 meters with over 350, and is first ham outside of North America on 160 meters with over 290 contacts. He is also an avid contester was elected to the CQ Contest Hall of fame in 1997.   Devoldere is also one of the best speakers in the hobby.

This is a show you won't want to miss. For registration and lodging information visit the www.qth.com/w9dxcc on the world wide web.   (W9JUV)

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THE SOCIAL SCENE: SVHFS IN NC NEXT APRIL

And make plans now to attend the 9th Annual Southeastern VHF Society Conference. The 2005 gathering will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina next April 29 and 30.

Guy Titman, K4NUS has offered to be host and facilities chair for 2005 gathering. More information is on the web at www.svhfs.org (VHF Reflector)

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BREAK 2

This is ham radio news for today's radio amateur. From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline with links to the world from our only official website at www.arnewsline.org and being relayed by the volunteer services of the following radio amateur:

(5 sec pause here)

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HAM TECHNOLOGY: HAM DREAM DIGITAL VOICE QSO

What is believed to be the first two-way digital voice contact in South Africa took place between ZS1AN and ZS1AU on August 10th. Contact was made on 15 meters with both amateurs using Ham Dream software for the QSO. Amateur Radio

Newsline’s Bruce Tennant, K6PZW has the details:

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Ham Dream is an open-source version of the Digital Radio Mondiale broadcasting standard. It was adapted for amateur use by HB9TLK and gives hams the ability to talk almost noise free. Here’s how.

Speech is converted to digital data using a low-bitrate vocoder analog to digital converter. The data is then transmitted using a high-speed modem. At the receiving end the data is decoded to recover the audio at the receiver. Although still in the evelopment stages, there is worldwide interest in Digital Voice, which can deliver very high signal-to-noise ratios over medium quality narowband S-S-B channels.

For those who want to experiment, HamDream software can be downloaded free of charge from the South African Radio League's website at www.sarl.org.za.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, Im Bruce Tennant, K6PZW, reporting.

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Further information on digital voice in ham radio is available on HB9TLK's website. Its in cyberspace at www.qsl.net/hb9tlk (GB2RS)

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: TiVO OVER THE NET

Federal regulators have approved technology allowing TiVo subscribers to send copies of recorded shows over the Internet. In its decision, the Federal Communications Commission said the new feature by Alviso, Calif.-based TiVo has enough protections in place to prevent mass distribution of copyrighted material.

The technology would allow a TiVo subscriber to download broadcasts to a computer and send copies of recorded shows over the Internet to an office or home or to a small circle of friends, as long as they are on the subscriber's registered account. The Motion Picture Association of America, the National Football League and others complained that the new service would allow the 1.6 million TiVo subscribers to redistribute shows over the Internet to virtually anyone, anywhere. (Published news reports)

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: FCC TAKES NEXT STEPS TO PROMOTE DIGITAL TV TRANSITION

Its full speed ahead with the conversion to digital television. So says the FCC as it issues a Report and Order that it says implements several steps necessary for the "continued progress of the conversion of the nation's television broadcast system from analog technology to digital television.

The paper covers almost every aspect of the conversion process over the next several years. It also highlights the coming events and should be considered "must reading" for those interested or involved in the future of digital T-V. You will find it on-line at

http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-250542A1.doc (CGC, FCC)

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WORLDBEAT: NEW UK REPEATER SERVES LONDON AND KENT

And if you are planning a trip to the UK, don't forget your reciprocal license and your HT. And be sure to try out a new repeater serving the needs of hams in the North Kent and South East London England area.

Its call is GB3OK and it is sponsored by the Bromley Repeater Group and it went on the air on the 16th of August. It transmits on 145.650 MHz with the standard 600 Kilohertz input offset and requires a 103.5Hz tone to access the receiver. The trustee of GB3OK or repeater keeper as the British call them is Tony Ravelini, G1HIG, in the city of Kent. (GB2RS)

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DX

In DX, HA3JB tells the Ohio Penn D-X Newsletter that he will operate as SU8BHI from Cairo, Egypt. This, from September 21st through December 20th. Activity will include CW, PSK, RTTY, SSTV and some SSB. QSL direct to HA3JB. (OPDX)

And UA9OBA, has been active as JT100M. This is a special callsign being used until September 13th during the Mongolian leg of the Altay-Himalaya Transasian off-road expedition. Activity has been mainly on 20 meters SSB around 14.180 Mhz. QSL via UA9OBA. (OPDX)

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THAT FINAL ITEM: THA FINAL ITEM: A KEYLESS T-HUNT

And finally this week, a Michigan ham radio operator from the Ford Motor Company was part of a two man team that has solved the mystery of malfunctioning remote keyless car door openers, garage door openers and other such devices in Las Vegas, Nevada. A problem with R-K-E devices that had baffled many residents since a massive outage began last February.

Las Vegas resident Bill Zawistowski was one of those complaining. He and others vented their frustration to anyone who would listen including the FCC. Ford responded by flying in two R-F detectives. Earl Morse, N8SS, represented the auto maker and Nabil Hachem was from Alps Automotive, which makes the keyless car-door devices. And it did not take very long for Morse and Hachem to figure out what was happening:

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Morse: "When we got there we discovered a signal in the paassband of the RKE receivers which was actually strong enough to keep the RKE from activating its own receiver in the vehicles. We investigated further and found it to be a stuck repeater. We can leave it at that."

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Morse says it was not much different than a ham radio T-hunt except for the

frequency:

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Morse: “Having experienced Fox Hunting first hand. the only difficult art was shifting all my equipment to that frequency. All of my antennas were relatively useless because they were cut to 2 meters an 440 so we had to make some new antennas for the 315 Mhz. band.”

“We did have one advantage in that the RKE group had purchased a Doppler direction finder and we utilized that a lot.”

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Morse tells Amateur Radio Newsline that once they found the transmitter it only took a few phone calls to get it turned off. The problem did surface again a week later but this time one landline call got it to go QRT for good. (ARNewsline (tm))

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NEWSCAST CLOSE

With thanks to Alan Labs, AMSAT, the ARRL, the CGC Communicator, CQ Magazine, the FCC, the Ohio Penn DX Bulletin, Radio Netherlands, Rain, the RSGB and Australia's W-I-A News, that's all from the Amateur Radio Newsline(tm). Our e-mail address is newsline @arnewsline.org. More information is available at Amateur Radio Newsline's(tm) only official website located at www.arnewsline.org. You can also write to us or support us at Amateur Radio Newsline(tm), P.O. Box 660937, Arcadia, California 91066.

For now, with Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, at the editors desk, I’m Don Wilbanks, AE5DW, saying 73 and we thank you for listening." Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) is Copyright 2004. All rights reserved.